

The problems/possible solutions of managing a high rise multi-tenanted office complex in Abuja metropolis - A case study of the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) house, No 6 Adetokunbo Ademola Crescent, Wuse II, Abuja

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ABSTRACT

The effective management of a multi tenanted high rise building structure requires an integration of several processes which do not readily come to the mind of a tenant or even the property owner. My observation and experience in the profession so far has shown that more than eighty percent (80%) of graduates of Estate Management in Nigeria never have the opportunity of managing high rise buildings during their years of professional practice. Property management involves services such as property inspection, rent collection, service charge collection, servicing and maintenance of property and facilities within, drafting agreements for tenancy, selection of worthy/capable tenants, handling of legal matters, overseeing security and maintenance of plant and machinery such as elevators, air conditioners intercom gadgets and generator. A high rise multi-tenanted building is that which is on at least five floors. Tenancy in such structures could either be residential, commercial or both residential and commercial. A multi tenanted high rise office building must be run in such a way as to meet up to business requirements. The anticipated standard of management rendered in such a building within Nigeria's capital city should be nothing short of top-notch. Management of high rise buildings in multiple occupations poses special problems. This critical analysis examines such problems and proffers solutions.

Keywords: High Rise, Multi-tenanted, Management, Maintenance, Services

1. Introduction

Industrial Training Fund (ITF) House is an imposing architectural edifice which is predominantly white in colour. Its floors comprise offices, passages, meeting rooms, technical rooms, elevator tubes, stair cases and rest rooms. It has two elevators to ease vertical movement. Each elevator carries approximately ten (10) people at a time. The structure also has staircases which besides using elevators, serve as emergency fire exits. The facilities installed include internet access, DSTV multi channeled cable TV, intercom telephone system and an out-door generator complimenting power supply from PHCN source. Fire extinguishers and fire alarm triggers can also be found on all floors at strategic locations. ITF House produces heavy traffic of humans and vehicles on a daily basis due to the nature of the offices therein. The property is presently managed by Achoru Associates with Abuja branch office in the same building. Other structures within the premises include Industrial Training Fund Skill Acquisition center on five (5) floors, Security houses (2 no's) and a Generator house.

2. Review of literature

2.1 Structural problems

A structural defect could arise as a result of relapse in a part of a building due to use over time or an error in design or construction (Enhassi, 2001). Several challenges have arisen from the design and structural defects in ITF House such as water sippage in different parts of the building such as dome-shaped front roof and glazed curtain wall. The glazed curtain wall is stepped on each floor which makes it retain water during the rainy season thereby leaking into front elevation offices on all floors.

2.2 Solution to structural problems

The dome-shaped roof has been re-roofed with long span aluminum measured to size. The flat decked areas of the roof have also been treated with 2-ply bituminous felt. The façade of the building is presently being redesigned and sloped to allow for free flow of water.

2.3 Security problems

Security problems are forms of challenges that must arise during the course of managing high-rise buildings (Odumodu, 2004). I.T.F house Abuja is not free of security problems. Llewellyn (2002) also pointed out that managing a high-rise building involves special security gadgets considering the heavy human traffic at all times. A problem being faced in the property is that the seventh (7th) floor which was initially designed to accommodate a single tenant, now occupies four (4) independent tenants. This is a security problem because the stair cases are accessible to this floor from the four corners thereby posing a big difficulty in monitoring human traffic.

2.4 Solution to security problems

Unlike the other floors which have two (2) security men each, the seventh (7th) floor of the property has four (4) security men assigned to it. Each security man stands by each stair case to enable better vigilance. Vehicle gate passes have also been introduced, with security men under instruction to improve vigilance during their shifts. Metal detectors and security cameras have also been introduced to enhance security.

2.5 Problem of lease renewal

Zick (1998) outlined that one of the major functions of a Property Manager is collection of rents as at when due. Multi-tenanted buildings come with problems of rent collection. In I.T.F house, there are often delays in payment of rents from tenants which has invited pressure from our client (ITF Headquarters). In most cases, clients feel that delay in rent payment is as a result of negligence or non seriousness on the part of the Property Manager.

2.6 Solution to lease renewal problem

The solution proffered to lease renewal problems is to write the tenant well ahead of time to ensure he factors in the rent in his nearest future budget. A “follow up” can also be done via visit or phone calls.

2.7 Problem of reconciliation of service charge account

Cox (2001) expressed that service charge is that money paid by tenants for maintenance of common areas/facilities in a property and could be paid at agreed rates/periods of convenience. Issues of service charge have always posed a great problem and ITF house is not an exception. Service charge payment is always made in January of every year but some tenants delay their payment for as long as seven to nine months. The running cost of the building is on the high side. For example it costs close to ₦1, 700,000.00 monthly to purchase diesel (for generator). Other forms of expenses under service charge include; purchase of items for cleaning of common areas, salary payment to in-house staff, PHCN bill payment, servicing of generator, lift maintenance, purchase of toiletries for toilets, uniforms for cleaners and security men which is changed quite often and so on. There should be continuity in service charge payment in order to achieve tenant comfort and satisfaction. Any delay in payment by a tenant affects others one way or another. The reconciliation of service charge is quite a tedious process and is done annually to explain the use of funds.

2.8 Solution to reconciliation of service charge account

Service charge account reconciliation should be done carefully and promptly to avoid any mistakes. It should equally accommodate detailed expenses done on various items. This reconciliation gives an idea of the way service charge funds were used during the year under review, and whether it could be adjusted upwards or downwards.

2.9 Problem of power supply/bill disagreement between tenants

The problem of power supply is one which has crippled many businesses in Nigeria in recent times. ITF house Abuja is not free of such problem. Power Supply has been on a very low side in the last three (3) years. Problems have always arisen also as regards PHCN bill payment and Water payments in the building. ITF house has a centralized meter servicing all tenants in the property. Some tenants claim that others have more gadgets in their offices than they do and believe they should pay less. The time frame used to resolve such matters lead to delay in payments which have often led to disconnection. Disconnection in the property equally means continuous running of the generator which means pressure on diesel usage bearing in mind that it is quite expensive.

2.10 Solution to problem of power supply/bill disagreement between tenants

The problem of power supply is one in which a Property Manager has no control over (Adebayo, 2002). All he can do is ensure that he makes adequate alternative. In the case of ITF house, the only alternative is the generator which consumes a lot of diesel (1,100 liters in three weeks). The generator which supplies the building works at times for as long as ten (10) hours a day. A schedule was introduced to regulate its use. An application has also been made to PHCN Headquarters for a dedicated power line. In the case of the electricity/water bills, previously all bills were shared according to size per square meter occupied by each tenant. A major ambiguity/pressure from tenants arose as to the number of equipment being used per office so we were forced to take inventory of equipment in all offices to enable us apportion the bills.

2.11 Inefficiency of sub-contractors

Sub-contractors in ITF house include cleaners, gardeners, security men and diesel suppliers. Inefficiency of some of these suppliers has always led to problems such as untidy environments, security lapse and inadequate power supply. Also, charges in respect thereof are quite high which makes it quite frustrating when sub-contractors fail to perform as they should. The charge for clearing of refuse in Abuja metropolis is fixed no matter the amount of refuse leaving a building. For example in ITF House, we pay as much as ₦900, 000.00 to Abuja Environmental Protection Board annually.

3. Solution to inefficiency of sub-contractors

A property manger should always be wary of the sub-contractors which he goes into contract with. If for any reason problems come up along the line, the option of replacement should be considered.

3.1 Impatience on the part of tenants for repairs “outside service charge account”

Tenants in ITF house are always very impatient when it comes to repairs to be carried out. These repairs could be due to insufficient funds to carry out the job. It could also be due to delay from ITF headquarters in cases where approval must be granted for the jobs to be done. Umezurike (1988) outlined that the problem of insufficient funds can be attributed to delay in payment of annual rents by tenants. Umezurike (1988) also explained that if all parties would play their roles promptly, it would lead to a smooth process (satisfaction for all).

3.2 Solution to impatience on the part of tenants for repairs “outside service charge account”

Harvey (2007) explained that “Property Manager/tenant relationship is a bitter/sweet one”. This is so because tenants could be at their best and could also be at their worst during occupation. All that a Property Manager should do in the above case is to ensure that all payments (rent and service charge) are paid promptly. He should also ensure that approval for all repairs is granted promptly by the client.

3.3 Insufficient vehicle parking space

A major problem in I.T.F house is insufficiency of parking space. Initially, the building was designed to accommodate only ITF staff but over the years, other offices were given out to tenants. This increased the pressure on available parking space. Also, some drivers park in disorderly manner as grounded vehicles litter the premises.

3.4 Solution to Insufficient vehicle Parking Space

The security men on the ground floor were given additional duties to ensure that drivers parked their vehicles properly to conserve space. All offices with grounded vehicles were also asked to remove the vehicles. In addition to the above, large areas of flower bed was reduced to create more parking area.

3.5 Problem of littering of premises

Umezurike (1988) outlined that littering of premises has always been a recurring decimal in multi-tenantable properties. Aliyu (2001) also outlined that it is a habit of occupants to

disrespect the immediate environment by littering. Despite the positioning of dust bins in different areas within the building and around the premises, visitors still drop pieces of paper and garbage in unwanted places. This problem creates additional work for cleaners.

3.6 Solution to problem of littering of premises

Routine patrol by cleaners done every thirty (30) minutes has been introduced to ensure that all unwanted materials are cleared immediately. Security men were also instructed within their capacities to advise people to use the dust bin.

3.7 Cleaning of upper external walls of structure

The external wall of the building is finely finished with white ceramic tiles. Brown patches of dirt over time can be observed on the walls especially the top most floors, just beneath the parapet wall. The patch of dirt tends to increase immediately after the rainy season. If some other colour had been used (mosaic tiles), perhaps very regular cleaning would be averted. Cleaning the dirt has proved a major task due to the height of the structure.

3.8 Solution to cleaning of upper external walls of structure

We had initially tried to use in-house cleaners. This would be much cheaper, but we considered the risk factor. Having to climb that high to work would be a big challenge especially to a person who has never done it. We then decided to use professional cleaners who use scaffolds for jobs that high. It was very expensive, but it got the job done without any mishap.

4. Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to appraise the problems/possible solutions arising in managing a high rise multi- tenanted office complex in Abuja metropolis with the following objectives;

1. To examine the general roles of a property manager
2. To determine the possible problems which arise in managing high rise buildings
3. To determine the solutions in tackling these problems
4. To examine the effectiveness in applying some of the solutions proffered
5. To determine the extent of tenant satisfaction in the property
6. To make necessary recommendation as to improve high- rise property management

4.1 Research methodology

The percentage score method of analysis was used to determine the frequencies of the respondents from the questionnaire. A total of 17 questionnaires were distributed and 17 retrieved. Due to the number of words required for this article, only six analyses are represented. Tables 1 -6 indicate as follows;

4.2 Analysis and interpretation

Table 1 shows that 41.2% of respondents are of the opinion that better security can be enhanced the most through more in-house security men, 11.8% are of the opinion that it is through external security cameras, 29.4% are of the opinion that it is through use of metal

detectors at entrance and 17.6% indicated use of security men in the premises. From the analysis above, use of more in-house security men will enhance security best.

Table 1: Best way of ensuring security in both building and premises.

Occupation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
More in-house security men	7	41.2	41.2	41.2
External Security cameras	2	11.8	11.8	52.9
Use of detectors at entrance	5	29.4	29.4	82.4
Use of police officers in premises	3	17.6	17.6	100.0
Total	17	100.0	100.0	

From table 2 on the most predominant problem faced by Tenants deterring occupation satisfaction, 5.9% of respondents were of the opinion that it is due to inadequate security, 17.6% due to inadequate electricity supply, 29.4% (inadequate car park) while 47.1% is due to water sippage in building. This indicates that water sippage through the curtain wall of building has affected tenant satisfaction most.

Table 2: Most Predominant Problem Faced By Tenants Deterring Occupation Satisfaction.

Factors	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Inadequate security	1	5.9	5.9	5.9
Inadequate electricity supply	3	17.6	17.6	23.5
Inadequate car park	5	29.4	29.4	52.9
Water sippage in building through curtain wall	8	47.1	47.1	100.0
Total	17	100.0	100.0	

From the data in table 3 above, 47.1% of respondents believe the rate of the property managers response to the problems has been above average, 47.1% believe it has been average, while 5.9% are of the opinion that it has been below average.

Table 3: Rate of property manager's response to management problems.

Measure	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Above average	8	47.1	47.1	47.1
Average	8	47.1	47.1	94.1
Below average	1	5.9	5.9	100.0
Total	17	100.0	100.0	

In table 4 on the most considered factor to enhance better management of ITF House, 5.9% of respondents were of the opinion of improved security, 47.1% (installation of back-up generator), 35.3% adequate supply of Electricity through PHCN dedicated line while 11.8% Training and re-training of in-house staff.

Table 4: Factor considered most to enhance better management of ITF house.

Factors	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Improved security	1	5.9	5.9	5.9
Installation of back-up generator	8	47.1	47.1	52.9
Adequate supply of Electricity through PHCN dedicated line	6	35.3	35.3	88.2
Training and re-training of in-house staff	2	11.8	11.8	100.0
Total	17	100.0	100.0	

From table 5, 70.6% of respondents believe that the problems in managing high rise buildings are strongly significant to the Property Managers performance, 17.6% are of the opinion that they are just significant, 11.8% (insignificant).

Table 5: Significance of problems to property manager's performance.

Significance	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly significant	12	70.6	70.6	70.6
Significant	3	17.6	17.6	88.2
Not significant	2	11.8	11.8	100.0
Total	17	100.0	100.0	

From table 6 on the general condition of, and welfare in ITF House 5.9% respondents were of the opinion that the response rate is good, 76.5% (manageable) while 17.6% (bad). This means that the bulk of tenants/visitors get manageable satisfaction from property managers response.

Table 6: General condition of, and welfare in ITF House

Reaction	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Good	1	5.9	5.9	5.9
Manageable	13	76.5	76.5	82.4
Bad	3	17.6	17.6	100.0
Total	17	100.0	100.0	

4.3 Summary of findings

1. The use of more in-house security men in ITF premises will ensure the best security measure in managing the property. Other factors to be considered include use of external security cameras, metal detectors and Police Officers.
2. In I.T.F house, the most predominant problem faced by tenants in occupation is sippage of water through the curtain wall
3. Findings indicate that the response rate to problems in ITF house by the Property Manager was rated at “average” and “above average” respectively by respondents.
4. The most predominant problem faced by the Property Manager in ITF house is inadequate vehicle parking space. Other problems in descending order include inadequate security, water sippage and insufficient mains power.
5. Some of the factors that will enhance better property management include improved security, adequate supply of electricity through PHCN dedicated line, installation of a back-up standby generator and training and re-training of in-house staff.

5. Conclusion

This study focused on determining the problems/possible solutions of managing a high rise multi-tenanted office complex in Abuja metropolis using a case study of the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) house. The problems/ possible solutions have been highlighted. The major factors which encourage beneficial manager/tenant relationship have also been looked at. The study showed that in managing high-rise multi tenant structures, the problems as outlined must arise. The nature, manner and rate with which they are taken care of is the responsibility of a property manager. The importance of addressing the problems as soon as they arise equally affect factors such as improved rent collection, good working condition relationship, prompt payment of service charge and adherence to house rules and regulations.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on observations, findings and analysis of results, the following recommendations are proffered to tackle some of the problems associated with high rise management;

1. **For Cleanliness:** It is recommended that in the management of high rise buildings, factors such as routine cleaning of premises, avoidance of littering, better salary for in-house staff, and adequate provision of toiletries should be encouraged to enhance cleanliness of the property.
2. **For Inefficiency of Sub Contractors:** Performance of sub contractors should be assessed at stated intervals to determine work rate. Regular inspection of common areas should equally be encouraged to monitor performance of in-house staff. Effective monitoring will bridge the gaps.
3. **For Structural Problems:** Structural defects should be corrected immediately observed to enhance the lifespan of a building. This is essentially the responsibility of the employer but the property has to drum it up

4. **For Insufficient Parking Space:** It is also recommended that when designing and constructing high rises, Architects/Engineers and Property Managers should note that the number of offices in the structure should be directly proportional to the space provided for car park. This is so because in most cases the number of offices determines the number/extent of visitors.
5. **For Security:** Routine checks should often be carried out by security men to monitor both structure and premises. Gate passes for vehicles and visitors' form (both at gate and entrance lobby) should also be encouraged. This will help checkmate/monitor passage in and out of the premises.

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